

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023*

**Remarks Following a Briefing on Extreme Weather Preparedness Efforts and an Exchange With Reporters**

*May 31, 2023*

*The President.* I just had a significant briefing from Cabinet members and agency chiefs to prepare for the 2023 hurricane season and peak wildfire season.

And last year, hurricanes and other extreme weather events here in the United States caused over \$165 billion in damages. Three hurricanes—Fiona, Ian, and Nicole—made landfall and did damage across a half a dozen States.

Thanks to the National Oceanic and—Oceanic Atmosphere and—Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—so-called NOAA—new hurricane modeling systems, we're getting more and more accurate forecasting of hurricanes—their tracks, their intensity, their associated storm surge—which means saving more lives because we can anticipate what is likely to happen with greater accuracy.

But there's more to do. Just last week, a supertyphoon weakened have—wrecked havoc across Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, causing a tremendous amount of damage. And our hearts go out to the people who have been affected.

But the pace of recovery there is an example of the importance of investing in our infrastructure. Recently installed cement utility poles mitigated the damage of the typhoon-force winds on the island's electric and communications systems—as opposed to wooden posts, which would have snapped. But the poles cost more up front—that's obvious—but they save money, they save lives, and they last a long time.

And the summer is also bringing a more active wildfire season to the United States. This year alone, wildfires have destroyed an area almost as big as the State of Maryland. Over the past 2 years, a third of Americans have been personally affected by extreme weather conditions.

With the impacts of climate change rapidly intensifying, more and more Americans will be affected. That's why we've also invested so much in making sure we deal with climate change and mitigate it.

We've just discussed the significant actions we've taken to help address these disasters and to mitigate the damage going forward. My "Investing in America" agenda includes new investments to make our communities stronger, to make our communities more resilient, and we're making the most significant investment ever in combating the climate crisis.

For example, the bipartisan infrastructure law, the Inflation Reduction Act—they both include record funding to increase community resilience to drought, flooding, and wildfires—like funding to clear trees and brush to create fire buffers in high-risk areas.

For example, I'm traveling to Colorado this afternoon, where the Forest Service is funding \$1.1 million to treat 600 acres of hazardous fuels, like trees and brush. This project, with over 300 homes and buildings in the area, is going to reduce the overall risk of wildfire in that area and, God willing, if anything happens, save lives.

We're also harnessing new tools like advanced satellite technology that's going to help get better at predicting where wildfires and storms are going so that we can better position our resources ahead of time to respond.

We've funded over 130 water projects to address the drought crisis in the West, including projects that are going to conserve tens of millions of gallons of water in drought-stricken areas like the Colorado River Basin.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is—the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—they've funded hundreds of projects across the country to improve flood and coastal resilience.

We're hardening—I asked about one coastal—a particular town—city. And instead of building back the—the beach to the point where it was—where it was before, you put how much more sand?

*Lieutenant General Scott A. Spellmon, Chief of Engineers and Commanding General, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.* Yes, sir. Basically, we're building it back to its full design profile. So instead of 30,000 cubic yards of sand, over 100,000 cubic yards of sand.

*The President.* Which is going to increase resilience as well and save people.

And we're hardening the electric grid to withstand stronger storms with stronger materials, and we're burying lines where we can. And that's likely to increase, God willing. We're creating microgrids to reduce the impact when power goes out and make it possible to get back up and running faster after a storm.

We're also funding conservation, restoration, and protection of coastal areas and flood resilience projects in disadvantaged communities. Across the country, we've got 32,000 projects funded or underway.

And if you want to find out what's going on in your area and how you may be impacted, just go to [build.gov](http://build.gov)—[build.gov](http://build.gov). And you can see a map and the—of the projects and search by county as to whether or not your community is affected and what we're doing in that community.

I want to close by thanking the brave Americans—and I mean that sincerely—the brave Americans who put their lives on the line to keep our communities safe—to the firefighters and other first responders, including FEMA personnel, who run toward danger while everyone else runs the other way.

And by the way—we were talking here earlier—we have firefighters in Canada right now helping the Canadians fight significant fires. They've helped us.

And we also have relationships with Australia. We have a—relationships around the world with organizations—with firefighting organizations that are available to us as we're making our firefighters available to them and their—our rescue people.

So thank you all very much for coming in.

And, again, go to [build.gov](http://build.gov), and you'll see a map there. And you can check what is in store for your communities and what we're doing.

Thank you.

*[At this point, several reporters spoke at once.]*

### *Public Debt Limit and Federal Budget Legislation*

*Q.* Mr. President, some progressives don't like the debt ceiling—debt deal. What's your message to them?

*The President.* I told—I—I told all these guys you wouldn't ask anything about what we just talked about. *[Laughter]* Was I right? Just wanted to show you I was right, right?

Now, we're going to deal with the debt ceiling. We have—we have—I think things are going as planned, God willing.

I'll have—I'll be landing in Colorado tonight in preparation for my commencement speech at the Air Force Academy tomorrow. And, God willing, by the time I land, the Congress will have acted, the House will have acted, and we'll be one step closer.

Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:14 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Extreme weather preparedness efforts, briefing; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Spellmon, Scott A.

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